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March 14, 2023

Maryland General Assembly  
Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee  
Annapolis, MD

RE: SB 878-Voting Rights Act of 2023 – Counties and Municipalities

Dear Senators,

We oppose SB 878 and respectfully request that you vote against it.

As a member of the MFRW (Maryland Federation of Republican Women) I agree with all of the points in opposition of SB 878 as cited below; particularly to paragraph 3 relating to “special preference to ‘protected class’”. We agree that all voters should be treated equally, and is that not already defined in a law somewhere?

The 1426 members of the Maryland Federation of Republican Women strongly OPPOSE HB 1104 – Voting Rights Act of 2023 – Counties and Municipalities. This proposed legislation is very likely to cause chaos in the elections of many counties and municipalities. It will override county charters enacted by ALL of the voters of those jurisdictions and have the Anne Arundel Circuit Court decide instead.

HB 1104 provides for jurisdictions to abandon their legally chosen methods of electing their county or municipal officials by districts or at-large or a combination of district and at-large representation and replacing them with ranked-choice voting, cumulative voting and limited voting without defining them. Ranked-choice voting is confusing to voters, takes longer to make 3 or more choices for each office without knowing who the top candidates will be in each round of voting. This can lead to drop off in voting in down-ballot races such as Board of Education. It also prolongs the counting and certification of elections and can lead to reduced voter confidence in election outcomes.

HB 1104 gives special preference to “protected class” defined as “a class of citizens who are members of a race, color, or language minority group”. All voters should be treated equally and all voters, regardless of color, race or language preference, should have equal voice in all elections.

P. 6 -7 provides for 2 or more protected classes that are politically cohesive within the election district of the local government may bring a combined claim of discrimination without requiring evidence that each protected class is separately polarized from other voters and does not require evidence that the local government discriminated against the protected class voters or any other evidence of discrimination.

Page 10 – (15.5-204 (A) (1)) provides for organizations whose mission would be frustrated by a violation or who would expend resources in order to fulfill its mission under this subtitle could bring an action to overturn election methods duly enacted by voters. An organization, including an organization formed outside of Maryland, would have more rights than citizens of Maryland.

HB 1104 will allow the Court to “reasonably increase the size of the legislative body” and order special elections or change the election process. These are decisions that should be made by the state or county legislative body not the court. HB 1104 will hurt not help voter participation in elections.

Sincerely,

Christine Hunt and Jay Crouthers